

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6371

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 2126

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS PBOR, PFOR, JO, IS, EG, XF

SUBJ: ANWAR KHATIB'S VIEWS ON WEST BANK NEGOTIATING PROSPECTS,
PLO, ETC.

REF: JERUSALEM 2071

1. SUMMARY. IN HOUR AND HALF DISCUSSION WITH ME AND FSO JONES
DEC 11 WEST BANK NOTABLE ANWAR KHATIB EXPRESSED GENERALLY
PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDE RE FUTURE, SUGGESTING HUSSEIN WOULD BE
ABLE REGAIN NEGOTIATING ROLE ONLY IF ISRAELIS OFFERED HIM
ATTRACTIVE PROPOSITION, E.G. RENPRN TO 1967 BORDERS. HE
FIRMLY REJECTED IDEA OF HIS OWN PARTICIPATION IN ANY PALESTINIAN
GOVT IN EXILE OR OTHER AFFILIATION WITH PLO BUT THOUGH FOR-
MATION SUCH GOVT POSSIBLE. HE BELIEVES SOME PLO (MAINLY FATAH)
MEMBERS PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE AND EVEN SIGN AGREEMENT WIOQ ISRAEL
ON BASIS 1967 BORDERS. HE DOUBTS EGYPT WILL BE ABLE AGREE TO
FURTHER SINAI DISENGAGEMENTS NO MOVEMENT IN PROSPECT ON OTHER
FRONTS AND FEARS FAILURE OF US TO MOVE ISRAEL RE WEST BANK
WILL FORCE EGYPT BACK TOWARD SOVIEK CAMP. KHATIB REPORTED HE HAD
SEEN PERES DEC 10 AT LATTER'S REQUEST AND HAD AGAIN CATEGORICALLY
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REJECTED SUGGESTIONS FOR WEST BANK LEADERS TO WORK OUT SETTLEMENT

DIRECTLY WITH ISRAELIS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN RELAXED MEETING DEC 11, LEADING HUSSEIN SUPPORTER AND FORMER JERUSALEM GOVERNOR ANWAR KHATIB GAVE ME HIS ASSESSMENT OF POST-RABAT DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER MOVES TOWARD ME SETTLEMENT. NOTING HE HAD MET WITH GOI DEFMIN PERES PREVIOUS DAY, HE EXPRESSED CONVICTION ISRAELIS NOT PREPARED TO WITHDRAW ONE INCH FROM WEST BANK (AND JERUSALEM) AND THAT "FIFTH ROUND" OF FIGHTING LIKELY BY SPRING. HE SAID PERES HAD AGAIN TRIED TO INTEREST HIM IN IDEA OF DIRECT DEALINGS BWTEEN WEST BANK LEADERS AND ISRAELIS TO WORK OUT LOCAL SETTLEMENT,BUT HE HAD "FOR FIFTH TIME" REFUSED CONSIDER IT. HE TOLD PERES ISRAELIS SHOULD FORGET THIS IDEA WHICH UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE AND UNACCEPTABLE NOW. HE ADMIRES PERES PERSONALLY, BUT FINDS EVEN HE IS SO INCAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING ARABS THAT HE (KHATIB) BELIEVES DIALOG WITH HIM TO BE USELESS.

3. KHATIB SAID RABAT DECISION ON PLO WAS NATURAL REACTION TO CONSISTENT REFUSAL OF ISRAELIS TO ACCEPT IDEA OF EXISTENCE OF A PALESTINIAN PUZZLE. HE THOUGHT (AND HAD TOLD PERES) THAT ARABS COULD AT SOME POINT REVERT TO HUSSEIN AS NEGOTIATOR BUT ONLY IF ISRAEL PREPARED TO GIVE HIM CONSIDERABLY BETTER OFFER THAN THEY HAD MADE SO FAR. SIMPLE GOI REJECTION OF PLO AS NEGOTIATIONG PARTNER WOULD NOT DO IT. HE HAD IN MIND RETURN TO 1967 BOUNDARIES AS ACCEPTABLE PROPOSAL. HE ALSO SAID HE BELIEVED SOME IN PLO (AT LEAST FATAH) WERE PREPARED TO SIGN AGREEMENT WITH ISRAELIS ON BASIS OF 1967 LINES.

4. KHATIB DESCRIBEDHIS DEC 2 DECLARATION IN EL QUDS IN SUPPORT OF RABAT DECISION (REFTEL) AS ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH POSITION

HE HAS ALWAYS TAKEN THAT PALESTINIANS MUST NEGOTIATE PALESTINIAN QUESTION BUT STATED CATEGORICALLY HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT POSITION IN ANY GOVT IN EXILE OR ANY OTHER AFFILIATION WITH PLO IF IT WERE OFFERED HIM. HE SUPPORTED A PALESTINIAN ENTITY BUT ALSO THE UNITY OF THE TWO BANKS OF JORDAN, AND HE INDICATED CONTINUED LOYALTY TO HUSSEIN, WITH WHOM HE APPARENTLY REMAINS IN CLOSE TOUCH. HIS PREFERRED POLITICAL OUTCOME WOULD BE FENDERATION WITH JORDAN.

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5. GREAT PRESSURES WERE BEING EXERTED ON HUSSEIN, KHATIB SAID, TO CUT TIES DEFINITELY WITH WEST BANK. THESE CAME FROM WITHIN ROYAL FAMILY, ARMY, AND FROM HIGH LEVELS OF GOJ. KHATIB WAS URGING KING TO RESIST AND MAINTAIN STATUS QUO. HE ALSO SAID THERE NOT A SHADOW OF DOUBT THAT IF WAR CAME AGAIN HUSSEIN WOULD ENTER ON FULL SCALE, REGARDLESS OF CONSEQUENCES; HUSSEIN "IS BITING HIS FINGER" AT NOT HAVING BEEN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN 1973.

6. KHATIB EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER SITUATION IN EGYPT WHERE HE SAID ATMOSPHERE AS REFLECTED E.G. IN PRESS HAD CHANGED FOR WORSE IN LAST FEW MONTHS. EVEN AT RABAT EGYPTIAN DELEGATION WAS WEAK, HE SAID, COMPARED TO SYRIAS, BECAUSE OF SADAT'S STRONG SUPPORT FOR KISSINGER POLICY WHICH WAS NOT ACHIEVING RESULTS WITH ISRAELIS THAT SADAT HAD ANTICIPATED. HE FEARED THAT WHAT HE SEES AS FAILURE OF US POLICY WAS FORCING SADAT TO GO BACK TO SOVIETS ON HIS KNEES, AND THAT A YEAR OR YEAR AND HALF FROM NOW WOULD SEE RADICAL LEADER IN CAIRO. HIS FINAL COMMENT WAS THAT "WE WILL MAKE MESS OF SITUATION IF IT LEFT TO US" AND US SHOULD IMPOSE SOLUTION.

7. COMMENT: GIVEN KHATIB'S GLOOMY VIEW OF COURSE DEVELOPMENTS ARE LIKELY TO TAKE, HE WAS PROBABLY SINCERE IN HIS CONTENTION THAT HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT ROLE IN PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE. HE STILL APPARENTLY BELIEVES, AS HE HAS CONSISTENTLY ASSERTED, THAT PALESTINIAN QUESTION IN ALL ITS COMPLEXITY CANNOT SUCCESSFULLY BE DEALT WITH AT THIS STAGE AND HE WOULD CLEARLY SEE LITTLE PROFIT IN BEING ASSOCIATED WITH AN ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH IT. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT RETURN TO '67 BORDERS WOULD REPRESENT JUST SETTLEMENT OF PALESTINIAN CLAIMS (HIS COMMENT ABOUT READINESS OF SOME IN PLO TO ACCEPT THIS SOLUTION WAS INTENDED CRITICALLY) BUT HE APPEARS CONVINCED THAT PALESTINIANS WOULD HAVE ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PUT UP WITH IT IF IT SHOULD BE IMPOSED ON THEM. OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES WOULD NOT SUPPORT FURTHER PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE.
DAY

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